

# Technology Toolbox



Jessica Werries  
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## Technology Toolbox Critique

### Critique Summary

The criteria I choose to critique the various tools I have used and explored over the course of the quarter include: usability, cost, instructional worth, and safety and security. In regards to usability, I looked at how easily the tools were navigable, as well whether or not I was able to quickly and easily learn to use the tool effectively and efficiently. With cost, I considered whether the tool was accessible for free or if the cost was reasonable. If the tool was free, I looked to see if it was funded through ads or alternative sources. With ad-funded tools, I evaluated the tool further based on whether the ads negatively affected the aesthetics and or utility of the tool. Moving on to instructional worth, I considered my previous teaching experiences as well as opportunities for use in the future. In exploring the tool I looked for opportunities in which the tool would have been a beneficial learning tool in my previous teaching and considered ways in which it could be used to facilitate learning as I continue teaching. I also looked at the value of the tool for personal use if it did not seem to be highly effective for instructional use. Finally, for safety and security I simply critiqued the tool on whether it would be safe and secure for students to independently use. I considered the reliability of the source of the tool as well as how information added when using the tool would be used and distributed. Also I looked to see if the content added to the site could be made private or had to be public domain. Overall, when looking at the tools from each category I will be critiquing the tools utility and effectiveness for use in an elementary classroom.

Usability	<b>5</b> Very Easy to Use	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b> Extremely Hard to Learn	How easy is the tool to learn and use?
Cost	<b>5</b> FREE	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b> Not Worth The Cost	Is the tool free or what is the cost? If free, is the tool ad-driven or funded by another means?
Instructional Worth	<b>5</b> Will Definitely Use	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b> Don't See any Use	How can the tool be used in the classroom or for personal use?
Safety and Security	<b>5</b> Safe and Secure	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b> VERY UNSAFE	Is the tool password protected or public domain? How is inputted information used?

## Aggregators: Google Reader

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Rating</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Usability	<b>4</b>	Google reader has a number of help resources available including: help videos, help center, getting started guide, etc. Very convenient in terms of having all the blogs, I like to check in one place! Also liked that I could use my Google account rather than signing up for a new service on another site.
Cost	<b>5</b>	FREE
Instructional Worth	<b>3</b>	Time saver in regards to having everything in once place. The ability to quickly and easily share things might be useful for sharing resources with teaching partners!
Safety and Security	<b>5</b>	Password Protected! Easy to set sharing settings.

## Social Bookmarking: Backflip

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Rating</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Usability	<b>5</b>	Backflip was very easy to learn and to navigate. The tutorial provided helped me to understand what the tool initially had to offer.
Cost	<b>4</b>	Free to use, funded by ads through Google. Ads are few and not too obnoxious.
Instructional Worth	<b>2</b>	Backflip is convenient but overall I don't see a lot of potential for classroom use, but maybe personal use.
Safety and Security	<b>5</b>	Must login to use and doesn't involve entering a great deal of personal information.

## Search Tools: Rollyo

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Rating</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Usability	<b>5</b>	Very easy to learn to use and explanations as to the benefits of using the tool.
Cost	<b>5</b>	Free to use and in my exploration of the tool I didn't come across ANY ADS!
Instructional Worth	<b>4</b>	By creating a customized search roll you could better monitor what types of sources your students are accessing when doing online research! Must login to use so students would need to know login information.
Safety and Security	<b>4</b>	<b>Helps to</b> monitor what types of websites your students are accessing. Must login to use.

## Webstart ProtoPage

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Rating</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Usability	<b>4</b>	Very easy to use, but very limited as to what you can do.
Cost	<b>4</b>	FREE-ad driven, ads are not obnoxious and you can easily remove advertisements that appear at the top of the page by clicking the x. Also there is the option to remove adds by paying \$2.49 a month...good option to have.
Instructional Worth	<b>4</b>	VERY USEFUL-I am currently developing a sweet Lewis and Clark Discovery learning space to use during my student teaching this spring! Great way to provide students with a starting point and guide to complete internet research.
Safety and Security	<b>4</b>	Option to have the space public or password protected.

## Weblogs (Blogging) Blogger

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Rating</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Usability	<b>4</b>	Easy to learn as you go but I'm sure there are a lot of things I have yet to figure out how to do.
Cost	<b>5</b>	FREE
Instructional Worth	<b>4</b>	Use to communicate with parents, share events and happenings in the classroom.
Safety and Security	<b>2</b>	Very Public. Have to be careful what types of information you post to the blog as the general public can access.

## Wikis PbWiki

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Rating</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Usability	<b>4</b>	Lots of help resources available. Daily help e-mails if you so choose. Pretty easy to explore and figure out but I'm sure there are a lot of aspects of the tool I have yet to discover!
Cost	<b>4</b>	Free for basic use. Option to buy expanded memberships with more options.
Instructional Worth	<b>5</b>	Very classroom friendly, ability to create accounts for students. Great tool to use for interactive book discussions! Hope to use for student teaching this spring.
Safety and Security	<b>5</b>	Lots of security setting options. Easy to create student accounts that are password protected. Option to make wiki open to the public or limit viewing to creator only or invited members. Also option to set users with reader, writer, or editor, privileges.

## Web-Based Word Processing Zoho Writer

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Rating</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Usability	<b>4</b>	The welcome sheet when I first registered for an account was very helpful in describing the features for this tool. Pretty easy to figure out, similar options to most other offline word processing programs. Limited font options ☹
Cost	<b>4</b>	Free for basic use and 1GB storage space, option to upgrade to 5GB storage space and more options for \$3/user/month.
Instructional Worth	<b>3</b>	Great for interactive writing activities. Also convenient for storing assignments. Might be difficult to use in an elementary classroom as students would need an e-mail address to create an account.
Safety and Security	<b>4</b>	Password protected. Monitoring content might be an issue with individuals having the ability to post to a common document.

## Creative Writing: Glypho

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Rating</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Usability	<b>5</b>	Very user-friendly and easy to navigate but due to my lack of interest in public creative writing I don't see myself using Glypho in the future!
Cost	<b>5</b>	Free to use.
Instructional Worth	<b>1</b>	Very neat concept but too much of a public domain for classroom use, and the terms of use require that you are 13 to register to use Glypho.
Safety and Security	<b>1</b>	Came across some inappropriate content in my exploration of the tool even before creating an account. Probably not a good tool for the classroom.

## Web-Based Spreadsheets: Google Docs & Spreadsheets

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Rating</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Usability	<b>5</b>	Very easy to learn as you go.
Cost	<b>4</b>	Free to use, operated by Google.
Instructional Worth	<b>2</b>	Great for personal use but not necessarily classroom use. Hard to use tools in the elementary classroom that require e-mail addresses to register.
Safety and Security	<b>5</b>	Must have user name and password to access, setting for sharing documents.

## Assessment, Surveys, Polls: SurveyMonkey

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Rating</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Usability	<b>4</b>	Had some difficulty in making my first survey but pretty much had the process figured out by the time I finally finished it.
Cost	<b>3</b>	Free for limited use, or \$19.95/month for a professional subscription.
Instructional Worth	<b>4</b>	Would be a great way to allow students to provide input and complete paperless assessments...IF you have the access to computers in the classroom.
Safety and Security	<b>4</b>	Must have a username and password to login.

## Podcasting & Screencasting: Audacity

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Rating</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Usability	<b>4</b>	Was pretty easy to use after simple directions and playing around for awhile. There is probably a lot more the program can do that I have yet to figure out.
Cost	<b>5</b>	<b>FREE</b>
Instructional Worth	<b>4</b>	Very cool and applicable if you are using online learning spaces in the classroom. I like the idea of creating a recorded version of required readings for students to access.
Safety and Security	<b>4</b>	Depends on how recorded content is used and monitored.

## Video: YouTube

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Rating</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Usability	<b>5</b>	Very easy to use in terms of browsing videos and uploading videos.
Cost	<b>5</b>	FREE and not overrun by obnoxious ads.
Instructional Worth	<b>2</b>	Blocked by most school's internet security. There are a great deal of very informational videos but may have to use a program such as CamStudio to use the content in the classroom.
Safety and Security	<b>2</b>	Content is monitored to an extent but not to the extent of being appropriate for elementary-age students. VERY public domain.



## Photo and Drawing: MS Photo Story 3

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Rating</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Usability	<b>5</b>	Very simple to learn and use.
Cost	<b>5</b>	Download free from Microsoft!
Instructional Worth	<b>5</b>	Great for developing presentations to share with class. Tool for students to use to create presentations.
Safety and Security	<b>5</b>	Once downloaded the use of the program does not involve internet access.

## File Sharing: Openomy

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Rating</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Usability	<b>3</b>	Basic use of the tool is not difficult but it looks like there is a lot more that a technology savvy user could do beyond that of a basic user.
Cost	<b>3</b>	Free for 1G of storage space. Unlimited storage available through Amazon S3 for a cost.
Instructional Worth	<b>2</b>	Personal use maybe, but I don't see any particular instructional worth. Must have an e-mail address to create an account.
Safety and Security	<b>4</b>	Must login to use, can securely share files.

## Webquests and Games: Oregon Trail

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Rating</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Usability	<b>5</b>	From Trisha's demonstration it looks like it would be easy to learn as you go and become very proficient in a short amount of time.
Cost	<b>3</b>	Sadly not free, but can be purchased for a very reasonable cost.
Instructional Worth	<b>5</b>	Awesome classroom resource for teaching the Oregon Trail. VERY ENGAGING.
Safety and Security	<b>5</b>	Safe and Secure. No internet access required to use.

## Presentation Tools: SlideShare

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Rating</i>	<i>Comments</i>
Usability	<b>4</b>	Seems easy to figure out basic use of the tool but would take some time to become proficient in using all the tool has to offer.
Cost	<b>5</b>	Free to use. Venture capital funding from Venrock.
Instructional Worth	<b>2</b>	Could be useful in embedding slides in online learning spaces. Overall, I don't see a lot of practical classroom application.
Safety and Security	<b>3</b>	Must login to use. Sharing options available.